Wet and windy for the Ryder Cup

Description

Our forecasters are predicting a spell of unsettled weather over the coming days, as strong winds and rain sweep across the country.

The weather conditions are likely to prove to be a challenge for the golfers at Celtic Manor in Newport, Wales, where a mix of gusty winds, heavy rain and showers are expected to affect the course during the matches.

Met Office Chief Forecaster, Will Lang said: “October looks like getting off to a very unsettled start, as Atlantic weather systems move in from the west. Competitors and spectators at the Ryder Cup should have wet weather gear close to hand.”

The changeable and very windy weather is expected to continue into next week, with the chance of gales and more heavy rain.

Date Created
September 2010

Royal Society launches new climate guide

Description

The Royal Society, the UK's national academy of science, has today launched a new short guide to the science of climate change. The guide has been written to summarise the evidence and to clarify the levels of confidence associated with the current scientific understanding of climate change. It makes clear what is well-known and established about the climate system, what is widely agreed but with some debate about details, and what is still not well understood.

The Royal Society report presents a clear view of what we know. But it is just as important to communicate the unknowns as clearly as possible and in examining uncertainty we must not throw away the useful information provided. By converting uncertainty into probability we can begin to make sensible decisions about climate change.

All too often uncertainty in science offers a convenient excuse for delaying important decisions. Science has established that climate is changing and that the world will need to make substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions over the next few decades if the worst impacts of dangerous climate change are to be avoided. The role of the Met Office and other scientists around the world will be to continue to press on in developing the emerging tools that will be used to underpin sensible adaptation and mitigation decisions which will determine all our futures.

The guide has been prepared by leading international scientists, mostly drawn from the Fellowship of the Society, including John Mitchell FRS, Director of Climate Science at the Met Office. It follows the publication of a number of other guides including by the Government Chief Scientific Advisor, Sir John Beddington, earlier this month, that also included input from leading Met Office scientists.

Related Articles

- Society unveils new climate guide (bbc.co.uk)
- Royal Society's climate change guide cuts confusion out of the hard science | Duncan Clark (guardian.co.uk)

Date Created
September 2010

Met Office in the News: 28 September 2010

Description

The Daily Express, among others, reports on ‘Snowy night is the coldest in 30 years‘. The cold conditions over last weekend were the result of high pressure, clear skies and a northerly air flow across the UK. Through the weekend some notably low minimum temperatures for September were recorded. Overnight Saturday in to Sunday, Tyndrum (Highland) recorded -4.4 °C, the coldest September night in records from 1990, and Tulloch Bridge (Highland) recorded -4.2 °C, the coldest September night in records from 1982. Exeter Airport recorded a low of -1.1 °C with Chivenor recording 2.2°C, the lowest September minimum since 1990 and Plymouth 3.5°C, the lowestsince 1974. Overnight Sunday into Monday, Kinbrace (Highland) recorded -4.4 °C, the lowest September night since 1989.

Today also sees the Met Office host a conference, exploring extreme winter weather in Devon. At this conference a severe weather response plan for Haldon Hill has been launched by local councils, agencies and emergency services through the Devon Local Resilience Forum. The aim is to prevent repeats of the traffic chaos caused by heavy snowfall over the last two winters. John Harrison, Met Office Road and Rail Business Manager, added: “Another cold winter like the last two is possible, so this conference provides the perfect platform to help plan ahead for potentially severe winter weather. We are on hand around the clock to help our customers make the best possible decisions to plan and prepare effectively for severe weather and minimise the impact on our local infrastructure and resources.”

Date Created
September 2010

Review of Summer 2010

Description

The UK’s weather is always full of contrasts, and summer 2010 was no exception. The provisional assessment for Summer 2010 saw mean temperature of 14.6 °C, which is just 0.6 °C above average. Rainfall was 10% above normal overall, but what was most noticeable was how different the weather was in June, July and August.

Mean temperatures were 1.5 °C above average during June, 0.7 °C above during July and 0.5 °C below in August. As for rainfall, June was drier than normal in most areas, July was much wetter than normal in the west and north, but drier in the south-east. In August, the wettest weather was focused on East Anglia, east Kent and parts of the east Midlands, although many areas saw above average rainfall.

A full assessment of Summer 2010 can be found on the Met Office website.

Date Created
September 2010

Explaining the science of climate change

Description

New web pages which explain the science behind the headlines on climate change have been launched by Government Chief Scientific Adviser Professor Sir John Beddington.

The web pages, produced with the support of leading scientists from the Met Office Hadley Centre and others, present an overview of some of the most important areas of study in climate change science. This overview will help anyone wishing to get beyond the day-to-day headlines and gain a deeper understanding of the fundamental scientific issues involved.

Professor Julia Slingo, Met Office Chief Scientist said: “I am delighted to have been consulted in the development of Sir John Beddington’s overview and guide to the underpinning science and observations of climate change.

“Our changing climate has huge implications for both policy and people, so it is essential we explain the complex science with as much clarity as possible. These web pages, authored by the Government’s Chief Scientific Advisor, are an important reference and will contribute to helping people understand the science of climate change”.

Sir John Beddington said: “Reporting on climate change science has often created more heat than light. The evidence is compelling that climate change is happening, that human activities are the major driver for this and that the future risks are substantial.

“At the same time, there is much we need to understand better; for example, the pace and extent of the changes we can expect, and regional impacts. I am grateful for the invaluable advice and inputs from Met Office experts that have helped in developing this new Government Office for Science climate science resource.”

This guide from Sir John Beddington is also supported by the Met Office guide to climate change at http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climatechange/guide/

Date Created
September 2010

BBC project to assess accuracy of long-range forecasts

Description

Roger Harrabin spoke on the Today programme on BBC Radio 4 this morning about a project to assess the accuracy of long-range forecasts.

The Met Office hopes to work with the steering group to input into how this research activity is undertaken and help to ensure that the methodology, data and comparison is done in a way that is scientifically credible.

This project will have a number of challenges to overcome. Verification of probabilistic long-range forecasts for large geographical areas is a difficult exercise, fraught with scientific challenges. For example, you can not just verify the forecast from one season as this may give a biased result. This type of forecast must be verified over a long time period, possibly 15 years or longer, to provide a measure of true skill. There will also be challenges in deciding what information is useful in verifying a forecast that covers much of North West Europe.

Date Created
September 2010

Met Office in the Media: 23 September 2010

Description

The Times has reported on a new piece of research by scientists at the Met Office Hadley Centre, which suggests that summers are likely to be much hotter, despite the fight to limit emissions. In 'Met Office warns of regular 40C heatwaves' Ben Webster reports that although global average temperatures may rise by 2 Celsius, regional changes and changes in the extremes we see may be much greater, possibly with serious consequences for some communities

The paper, by Robin Clark, James Murphy and Simon Brown, revealed that even if average warming is limited to 2°C, estimated increases in temperature during the hottest days range from 2°C to 6°C for parts of Europe, North America, and Asia. The researchers also investigate the sources of uncertainty in estimates of regional changes.

The Times reported that these changes were possible by 2040. However this would be at the most extreme end, with global temperatures more likely to warm by 2 Celsius by 2050.

The paper is published in Geophysical Research Letters of the American Geophysical Union.

There has been widespread coverage recently that the parting of the Red Sea may have been caused by strong winds. The New Scientist quotes the Met Office director of weather science that although the strong NE'ly wind may well have caused a miraculous opening of the waters somewhere, he doubts that sustained winds of sufficient strength could have been achieved near the Lake of Tanis.

Finally Andre Revkin, in his Dot Earth blog, has reported on a a new scientific paper "An abrupt drop in Northern Hemisphere sea surface temperature around 1970," is published in the Sept. 23 issue of Nature. The Met Office Hadley Centre has contributed to this paper, developing the datasets used in this analysis. This has involved taking account of all the different ways of measuring sea surface temperatures (including buckets over the sides of ships, engine room intakes, moored and drifting buoys). Within the article Met Office head of climate monitoring and attribution highlights the quality of the historical observational data that is "now good enough to identify this level of detail in how the climate varies and changes".

Date Created
September 2010

Met Office iPhone app tops one million downloads

Description

More than a million people have downloaded our iPhone app, making it one of the most downloaded non-social media or gaming mobile phone applications in the country.

It is believed that its popularity now ranks it within the top five most downloaded apps for the popular handset in the UK.

Charles Ewen, head of web business at the Met Office said: “The iPhone application was one of a number of projects undertaken to help make weather information available to the public for free and the costs for many activities, including data services and design, were shared among them.

“We have just received the latest figures regarding downloads of the Met Office weather app and they now top one million. Due to its success, we are currently planning more work to make weather information available across other mobile devices, as well as upgrading the iPhone version.”

The application allows users to access the latest weather forecast for the next 5 days for their chosen location, gives severe weather warning and access to the latest UK rainfall radar imagery.

Date Created
September 2010

Hurricane hat-trick in North Atlantic

Description

Satellite image showing Karl, Igor and Julia on 16 Sept 2010. The first time in 12 years that three hurrican

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Satellite image showing Karl, Igor and Julia on 16 Sept 2010. The first time in 12 years that three hurricanes have existed simultaneously in the Atlantic

Tropical cyclone activity is reaching a peak across the globe with the potential for a triple landfall of storms in the Atlantic and Pacific this Saturday and Sunday.

The 2010 Atlantic hurricane season remains very active with Hurricane Julia joining Karl and Igor. This is the first time in 12 years that three hurricanes have existed simultaneously in the Atlantic, and Julia was the strongest hurricane to have formed so far east since credible records began in the 1970s.

Earlier this week both Julia and Igor were simultaneously classified as Category 4 hurricanes — the first such occurrence in the Atlantic since 1926.

Tropical cyclone activity is reaching a peak across the globe with the potential for a triple landfall of storms in the Atlantic and Pacific over this weekend.

Karl made landfall on the south-west Gulf coast of Mexico, weakening as it made landfall and is now classified as a tropical storm. Heavy rain over the mountainous areas is expected to lead to floods, as well as extreme winds.

To the east Hurricane Igor has weakened slightly but remains a major storm. Igor, with sustained speeds of 105mph, is threatening to pass directly over Bermuda today, the US-based National Hurricane Center has warned.

Hurricane Julia, currently over the centre of the North Atlantic Ocean, has weakened also, with sustained winds of 75mph.

Meanwhile, Tyhoon Fanapi in the western Pacific is approaching Taiwan and is expected to make landfall Sunday. Although only equivalent to a Category 1 or 2 hurricane, winds are still gusting to around 115 mph. The biggest threat will be heavy rains and subsequent disruption in remote mountainous areas.

Met Office forecasters are continuing to work with the National Hurricane Center in the USA and provide predictions of the storms to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Date Created
September 2010

Avoiding dangerous climate change: An international perspective

Description

The world will need to make substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions below current levels over the next few decades if the worst impacts of dangerous climate change are to be avoided.

This was a key conclusion from UK and US climate scientists at an international workshop on the UK AVOID program in Washington, DC exploring the most policy-relevant aspects of understanding dangerous climate change.

Latest results from AVOID have shown that strong mitigation action to limit temperature rise to below 2 °C avoids many of the climate impacts, but not all of them. Examples show that 50% of the impact of water scarcity, and almost 40% of the impact of decreasing crop suitability can be avoided through early action on greenhouse gas emissions. Time is short and delaying action reduces the chance of limiting temperature rise to 2 °C and increases the chance of significant impacts.

The AVOID program is a unique inter-disciplinary research collaboration across the physical sciences, climate impacts and the technical and socio-economic implications of climate change.

AVOID is targeted to provide policy-focused research and evidence needed to allow policymakers to develop mitigation and adaptation policy that is strongly grounded in scientific evidence. This workshop — the first international meeting of AVOID — was designed to discuss, engage and partner with US scientists.

Jason Lowe, Head of Mitigation Advice at the Met Office and Chief Scientist for the AVOID program, said: “This workshop has provided the opportunity to compare approaches in the UK and US to identify the results that are the most robust. The aim now is to work together to find concrete ways of taking forward the best UK and US science for the benefit of policymakers.

“Such work is essential to inform government policies, both in the UK and the US, by providing robust and up-to-date evidence.”

Peter Backlund, Director of Research Relations at the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) in Boulder, Colorado, and Director of NCAR’s Integrated Science Program, said: “Designing mitigation and adaptation strategies to avoid dangerous climate change is a major challenge for the US, the UK, and other nations.

“Scientific research is critical for informing this process, but the scientific community needs to do a better job in focusing research efforts on issues that are central to making decisions about how to respond to climate change.

“The UK AVOID program, with its integration of research from multiple institutions across the physical, social, and economic sciences, is one of the best examples of delivering advice that is directly relevant to policymakers.

“The program is producing useful information about the probabilities of achieving emissions reductions, the consequences of different levels of emissions, and options for reducing impacts. I am hopeful that we can create a similar program here in the US.”

Participating UK and US scientists agreed to explore further options for collaboration in this area of science of relevance to policymakers.

Date Created
September 2010

Met Office in the Media: 16 September 2010

Description

Climate change remains high on the news agenda in recent days and Dr. Vicky Pope, Met Office head of Climate Advise has written an article in The Guardian today. 'How science will shape climate adaptation plans' explains how scientists must press on in developing the emerging tools that will help governments make decisions on adapting to climate change. The role of the Met Office is very much about undertaking targeted research that answers the questions being asked of policymakers. Over the past week UK scientists from the Met Office led AVOID programme have been meeting US counterparts in Washington, DC. The meeting, supported by the FCO and DECC, has been organised to present the latest results of the programme. The workshop clearly showed that the world will need to make substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions below current levels over the next few decades if the worst impacts of dangerous climate change are to be avoided.

This just highlights how the Met Office is engaged in supporting government make policy decisions on mitigation and adaptation that are based in robust science.

A new study from the University of Bristol, using the Met Office climate model has shown that the impact of geoengineering would be felt in very different ways across the world.

Finally, the BBC have asked the question 'How dangerous is the weather to our health?'. In the piece the BBC look at the services being provided by the Met Office to help keep COPD patients out of hospital.

Related Articles

- How science will shape climate adaptation plans | Vicky Pope (guardian.co.uk)
- Climate change is inevitable, says Caroline Spelman (telegraph.co.uk)

Date Created
September 2010

How do we avoid the worst impacts of our changing climate?

Description

The world will need to make substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions below current levels over the next few decades if the worst impacts of dangerous climate change are to be avoided. This was a key conclusion from UK and US climate scientists at an international workshop on the UK AVOID program in Washington, DC exploring the most policy-relevant aspects of understanding dangerous climate change.

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Date Created

September 2010

Met Office in the Media: 15 September 2010

Description

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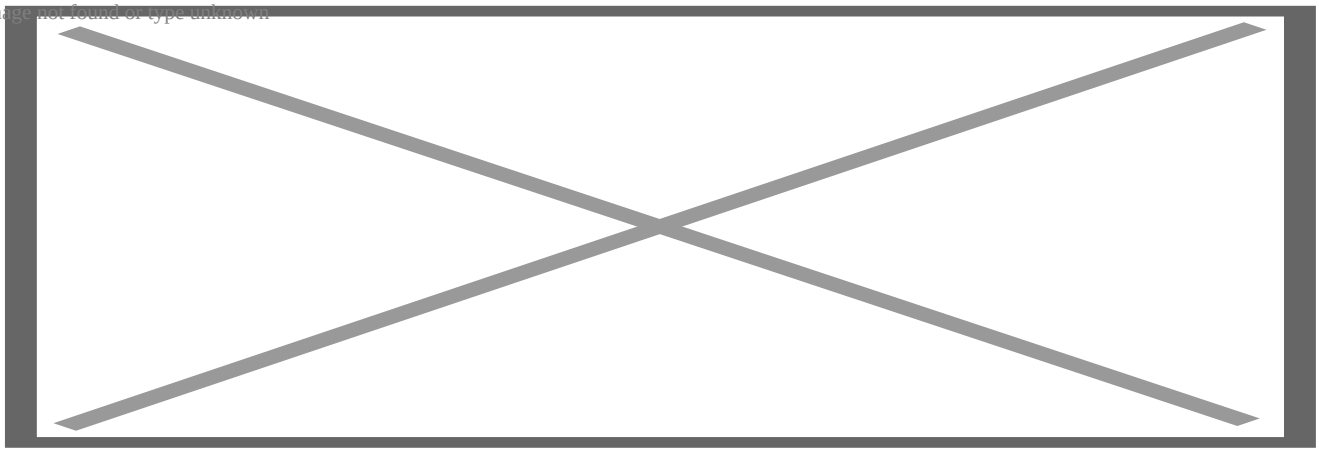

Following the publication of a new flood action plan for Northumberland 2 years after the Morpeth floods, the Morpeth Herald reports how the local council will be improving its responsiveness to flooding incidents. The Met Office is, with the Environment Agency, critical in helping to protect life and property at times of severe weather and flooding. The new plan clearly acknowledges our role and highlights a new service, Hazard Manager, that has been developed in recent years. Hazard Manager from the Met Office is a new web portal enhancing support to the Emergency Response community. Hazard Manager will be a one-stop information source for the emergency response community, allowing access services in one location, using a single username and password.

The Met Office provides a range of services that help authorities prepare for and respond to emergencies that are caused or influenced by the weather. Linked to these services is advice, available from teams of Met Office forecasters, specialist scientists and advisors, on the interpretation and impact of the weather during an emergency. This service is co-ordinated through the Met Office's team of regionally-based Public Weather Service (PWS) Advisors who can be called upon to provide advice at a strategic command and control centre.

Date Created
September 2010

Avoiding dangerous climate change – An international perspective workshop

Description

How to avoid dangerous and costly impacts of climate change and adapt to those that may be unavoidable is an international problem, requiring a combination of the best scientific advice, strong policy leadership, and varied approaches.

UK and US researchers with perspectives across climate science, climate impacts, socio-economic implications and technologies will meet in Washington DC from Tuesday 14 to Thursday 16 September to share their latest research on the most policy-relevant aspects of understanding dangerous climate change.

Scientists from the AVOID program will present latest findings with leading US climate scientists with the aim of fostering stronger relationships between UK and US climate policymakers and science researchers.

The workshop, organized by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Science and Innovation Network and Department for Energy and Climate Change, the UK Met Office and the US National Centre for Atmospheric Research, will draw on work carried out in the UK and US, shaped by the themes of the UK government funded AVOID program – a unique UK inter-disciplinary research collaboration seeking to answer the most policy-relevant questions about how to avoid dangerous climate change.

AVOID experts conduct international analyses and comparisons for policymakers to determine what constitutes dangerous anthropogenic interference in the climate and what policy pathways nations can take to avoid harm, addressing the critical questions:

- What is the latest thinking on the impacts of climate change? What level of change is dangerous? What findings are most certain and which call for additional research?
- What long-term impacts can be avoided by near-term action?
- How do choices we make now affect which options will remain open for future generations?

More information on the AVOID program can be found at http://www.avoid.uk.net/

Date Created
September 2010

Met Office in the Media: 8 September 2010

Description

The global surface temperature workshop hosted at the Met Office continues to generate media interest. Discovery News reports on providing climate data for the masses. You can read more about the conference and watch an introductory video on the aims of the workshop in an earlier post. Other related articles include Temperature records to be made public (telegraph.co.uk), Making climate data free for all (nature.com) and You: Google may aid global climate project (guardian.co.uk).

Mobile Met Unit forecaster briefing and Officer

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Mobile Met Unit forecaster
briefing and Officer

In a feature on MoD news website, SOLDIER magazine reports Weather experts keep the Armed Forces one step ahead. In the article Ian Matthews of the Met Office and Operations Officer of the Joint Operational Meteorology and Oceanography Centre (JOMOC) which provides information about current and future environmental conditions. explains “Weather can have a massive impact on operations, large-scale missions can be delayed or brought forward depending on what the weather window is like and what impact it will have on things like aviation support. That knowledge gives commanders a big military advantage.”

JOMOC is staffed with a mix of Met Office weather forecasters and Royal Navy weather forecasters and oceanographers, who work together to make sure that our armed forces across all services and in whatever location they may be have access to some of the best weather, climate and oceanographic information in the world.

Land forecaster Squadron Leader Bruce Sherratt, a professional meteorologist from the Met Office, serving with the RAF Reserves, has deployed to theatre for three five-month periods, each time working closely with the International Security Assistance Force’s aviation assets.

The officer said that although helicopter and fast jet pilots have always relied on accurate weather information, those in charge of the mission’s unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are becoming more aware of how the atmosphere affects them:

“Everywhere I have been, meteorology has been one of the biggest factors and I think it should be treated as an intelligence asset. When you are planning a battle and have a million things to think about, one person who knows about meteorology can provide some really important information. I think we can add enormously to the mission. Yes, we can tell you about the weather, but our information can

also give you an idea about what the enemy might be planning to do and that can be used to your advantage. For UAVs, not having cover can put missions in jeopardy because the troops on the ground are operating in a dangerous environment.”

Date Created
September 2010

Global land temperature – a new approach

Description

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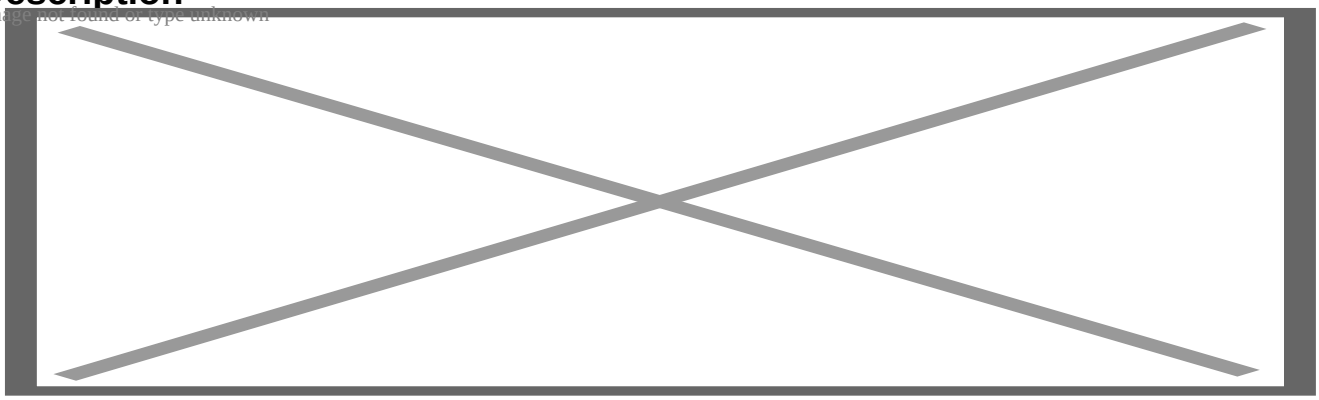


Today sees the start of an international workshop to initiate development of a new suite of global land surface temperature datasets hosted at the Met Office in Exeter.

In February 2010, after active discussions over a number of years within the climate science community, the Met Office proposed the development of such a record at a WMO Commission for Climatology meeting in Turkey. The meeting endorsed this proposal and this workshop is the initial meeting and invitations have been extended to the international community to work together in developing and delivering this ambitious goal.

The International Organising Committee is chaired by Peter Thorne and consists of scientists from a range of disciplines; among them statistics, scientific measurement, modelling, IT experts and economics.

Peter Thorne explains the aims and aspirations of the workshop taking place this week.

Earlier this year, Nature published an article written by Peter Stott of the Met Office and Peter Thorne of the Cooperative Institute for Climate and Satellites, explaining the rationale behind the proposal and how it might work – see http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/conference/surftemp/SurfTempWorkshop_background_report.pdf.

The workshop follows international recognition of the emerging requirement in recent years for a more comprehensive temperature record. The initiative taken by the UK Met Office in its specific call to World Meteorological Organization (WMO) means it is accordingly co-sponsored by WMO Commission for Climatology, the World Climate Research Program, and the Global Climate Observing System.

The aims of the workshop are to create an agreed international framework to move forwards. As yet that framework is not certain and it would be wrong to pre-determine outcomes but the key over-arching aims are likely to be:

- Improved databank of raw data with better sampling in space and time, better station history information and version control.

- A suite of verifiable datasets from that databank meeting certain minimum scientific requirements that are independently produced.
- Fundamental assumptions need to be questioned.
- Creation of a consistent set of test cases against which to assess the datasets and a consistent benchmarking exercise.
- Creation of tools to use and analyse the data to support decision making.
- The workshop is an exercise in climate science openness and is truly international with every effort made to gain input in advance from non-participants.

In this initiative surface temperatures are the focus but it is important to recognise that further variables need to be considered at a later stage. Temperature alone is not climate and this represents the start of a much broader effort to better characterise the observational record to meet 21st Century societal requirements.

Date Created
September 2010

Met Office in the Media: 06 September 2010

Description

Many newspapers have reported on the workshop being hosted by the Met Office this week looking to initiate development of a new suite of global land surface temperature datasets. The Sunday Telegraph reported 'Temperatures records to be made public'. The Observer reports on how the project is looking outside the usual climate science community to help meet this new challenge in ' Google and Galaxy zoo could aid global climate project'

The Times has run a large feature today on the 150th anniversary of the first weather observation report being printed in the paper. The feature explored Admiral FitzRoy, the founder of the Met Office and went on to look at the history of the Met Office over the last 150 years or so. More about the Met Office can be found on our website.

In the second part of a special Radio 4 series the BBC's Environmental Analyst Roger Harrabin questions whether his own reporting – and that of others – has adequately told the whole story about global warming.

In this episode Roger speaks to Dr. Vicky Pope from the Met Office on the issues on communicating climate science to policymakers and the media.

Date Created
September 2010

Hurricane season gets active

Description

After a relatively quiet start to the Atlantic tropical storm season, there has been a marked increase in activity over the last week.

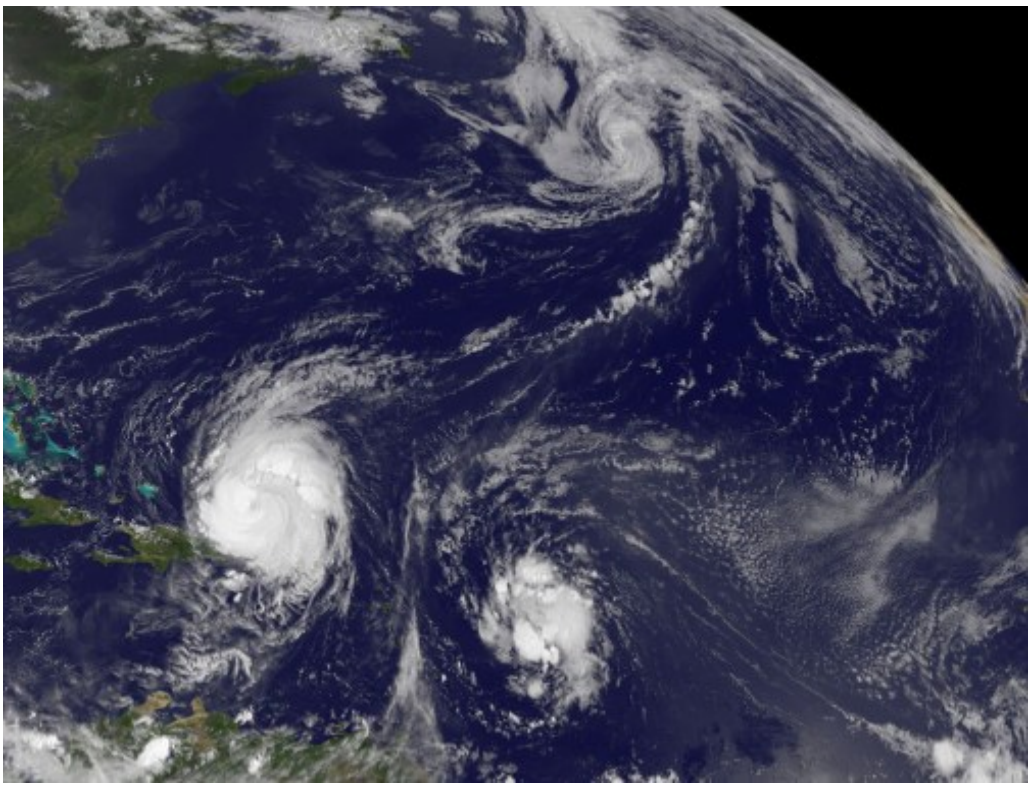
Following on from the category four Hurricane Danielle, Earl peaked with gusts in excess of 130 miles an hour and brought destructive winds to the Leeward Islands.

Although it is expected to weaken, Earl is likely to track close to the US and Canadian coast during the rest of the week and bring heavy rain, high winds and rough seas from North Carolina to Nova Scotia.

Meanwhile, Tropical Storm Fiona is following behind closely, with the prospects of further developments over the tropical Atlantic.

September is often the busiest months of the year for Atlantic Hurricanes. Earlier this year the Met Office predicted that this season would be one of the most active tropical storm seasons on record, with 20 named tropical storms most likely.

Met Office forecasters will continue to work with the National Hurricane Center in the USA and provide predictions of the storms to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



Hurricane Earl (lower left) passing Puerto Rico, Tropical Storm Fiona located to Earl's east, and Tropical Storm Danielle far in the Northern

Atlantic taken at 1145GMT on August 31st. The cloud in the far bottom right of the image is an area of possible tropical storm development. (NASA/GOES Project)

Date Created
September 2010

BBC Radio 4 – Uncertain Climate

Description

In a special Radio 4 series the BBC's Environmental Analyst Roger Harrabin questions whether his own reporting – and that of others – has adequately told the whole story about global warming.

He finds that the public under-estimate the degree of consensus among scientists that humans have already contributed towards the heating of the climate , and will almost certainly heat the climate more, but he also finds that politicians and the media often fail to clearly show the uncertainties in how our climate may change in the future.

This two-part report speaks to some of the leading players in climate science, and the Met Office has contributed to the programme with Dr. Vicky Pope appearing in part two of the series.

Episode one is available on BBC iPlayer at the moment and episode two airs next Monday 6th September, 9am on BBC Radio 4 FM.

Date Created
September 2010